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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 1659  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000653

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/01/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [TH](#)  
SUBJECT: THAI UPDATE: KING'S HEALTH, SINGAPORE SPAT

REF: A. SINGAPORE 221 (DUSTUP)  
[1](#)B. OSC REPORT SEP20070130116019 (MAHATHIR)  
[1](#)C. BANGKOK 524 (MEETING WITH NITYA)

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) The King appeared mentally alert if only moderately energetic and able to engage in a sustained discussion when the Ambassador observed him in a discussion with visiting Mahidol Prize Award winners. A Singaporean diplomat told us her Embassy was consumed with efforts to minimize recent damage to Singapore's bilateral relationship with Thailand. A Thai MFA official, however, downplayed the significance of recent contentious exchanges between Singapore and Thailand. End Summary.

UPDATE ON KING'S HEALTH  
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[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador attended January 31 ceremonies in honor of the recipients of this year's prestigious Prince Mahidol Awards for outstanding achievement in the field of public health. In a private session with the recipients (three of the four of whom were Americans), King Bhumiphol not uncharacteristically spoke so softly that even those close to him had difficulty hearing what he said. However, once he began discussing soil projects and other issues of longstanding interest to him, the King was actively engaged in the conversation, which continued for an hour. He still walks shakily, with a cane, but his overall health seems stronger than when the Ambassador last saw him, in early December.

SINGAPORE-THAI SPAT  
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[1](#)3. (C/NF) A Singaporean diplomat told us on January 31 that her embassy was currently consumed with efforts to minimize the damage to the bilateral relationship caused by Thai denunciation of deposed Prime Minister Thaksin's recent visit to Singapore, and allegations that Singaporeans could monitor communications on networks owned by Singaporean firms (ref A). The diplomat noted that Singaporeans considered the latter charge by far the more serious, as it pertained to violations of Thai sovereignty.

[1](#)4. (U) A prominent Thai journalist seemed happy to stoke the controversy by airing an interview with former Malaysian

Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, in which Mahathir, with the reporter's encouragement, denounced Singaporeans as self-centered and uncaring (ref B). Mahathir agreed that Singapore owed Thailand an apology for the reception given to Thaksin, and he thought it quite likely that the Singaporeans were eavesdropping on Thai communications.

15. (C/NF) The Singaporean diplomat said that the recent controversy had cast a serious chill over the bilateral relationship, which was unlikely to improve significantly during the term of Surayud's administration -- despite her government knowing well Surayud and other key figures. Citing MFA Permanent Secretary Krit Garnjana-Goonchorn's prior close ties to Thaksin, she speculated that Krit might have found bashing Singapore a convenient way to demonstrate his loyalty to the interim administration.

16. (C/NF) The Singaporean diplomat noted that, although the Thai lack a tradition of soccer hooliganism, she was monitoring with concern the upcoming ASEAN Championship soccer matches between the Singaporean and Thai national teams. Singapore -- the home team -- won the January 31 match, which featured the Thai team temporarily abandoning the field to protest a penalty. The second match will take place in Bangkok on February 4.

17. (C) A Thai official in MFA's East Asia Department offered a much less alarmed view, claiming the current friction did not represent a serious rift. However, our MFA contact highlighted Foreign Minister Nitaya's discussions with his Singaporean counterpart in Cebu (ref C), and the sensitivity of any matter involving Thaksin. The Thai official said Nitaya remained actively engaged in managing relations with

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Singapore. Our contact added the Thai Police were concerned about the upcoming soccer game and would heighten security for the Singaporean players.  
BOYCE